

## A Gramscian perspective on colonial baroque: Goa 1650's-1720's<sup>1</sup>

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Recibido: 26 de noviembre de 2020 / Aceptado: 13 de enero de 2021 / Publicado: 15 de febrero de 2021.

**Abstract.** The present study provides a comparative analysis of whitewashed stucco moldings and polychrome gilded altarpieces, major elements of the distinct decorative style that originated in colonial Goa during the period under investigation. The study's comparative approach focuses on the combination of these materials and the entangled evolution of their decorative motifs. The article employs Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to analyze the artistic patronage of a selected group of religious buildings that are particularly important from the perspective of their decorative program. The theory of cultural hegemony is applied to the discursive and stylistic formulations of the local secular clergy against the background of jurisdictional conflict between the Crown and the Holy See. Through this approach, this study highlights the ability of local elites to legitimize their status and assert their dominance through active consensus strategies, namely the persuasive effects of baroque architecture. The distinct quality of the Goan baroque that emerged within this process of artistic appropriation, is here interpreted in its transversal, emulative and intrinsically allusive aspects.

**Keywords:** Colonial Baroque – Cultural Hegemony – Portuguese India – Goan Clergy – Indo-Portuguese Architecture – Indo-Portuguese Retablos.

### [es] Una perspectiva gramsciana del barroco colonial: Goa 1650's-1720's

**Resumen.** El presente estudio ofrece un análisis comparativo de las molduras de estuco enalado y de los retablos policromados, elementos principales del estilo decorativo que se originó en la Goa colonial durante el período bajo investigación. El enfoque comparativo del estudio se centra en la combinación de estos materiales y en la evolución enmarañada de sus motivos decorativos. El artículo utiliza la teoría de Antonio Gramsci sobre la hegemonía cultural para analizar el mecenazgo artístico de un grupo de edificios religiosos que son particularmente importantes desde la perspectiva de su programa ornamental. La teoría de la hegemonía cultural se aplica a las formulaciones discursivas y estilísticas del clero secular local en el contexto del conflicto entre la Corona y la Santa Sede. Mediante este enfoque, el presente estudio pone de relieve la capacidad de las elites locales para legitimar su condición y afirmar su dominio mediante estrategias de consenso activo, a saber, los efectos persuasivos de la arquitectura barroca. La cualidad distintiva del barroco de Goa que surgió en este proceso de apropiación artística, se interpreta aquí en sus aspectos transversales, emulativos e intrínsecamente alusivos.

**Palabras clave:** barroco colonial; hegemonía cultural; India portuguesa; clero goano; arquitectura indo-portuguesa; retablos indo-portugueses.

**Summary.** 1. Framing the problem: crisis, authority, and artistic patronage. 2. Enduring conflicts and fragile conjunctures: the early development of the Goan baroque. 3. Towards the discursive and stylistic appropriations of the local clergy. 4. Baroque as hegemonic practice and its local appropriations. 5. Conclusions: the allusive implications of the emulative attitude. 6. Written sources and bibliographical references.

**How to cite:** Gusella, Francesco. "A Gramscian perspective on colonial baroque: Goa 1650's-1720's". *Eikón Imago* 10 (2021): 331-347.

<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of the research fellowship that I undertook at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) - University of Edinburgh in February and March 2020. I want to thank the IASH staff and fellows for the unique opportunity to conduct my study at the Institute. I would like also to thank Carla Alferes Pinto and Walter Rossa for their help in sourcing the images. A special acknowledgement goes to Julie Davies of the Supportstelle Englisch at the University of Münster for editing the text.

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## 1. Framing the problem: crisis, authority, and artistic patronage

The present study provides a comparative analysis of the stucco moldings and wooden altarpieces that feature in the religious architecture of Portuguese India from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward. Whitewashed stucco moldings and polychrome-gilded woodcarvings are major elements of the distinct decorative style that originated in the region around Goa during this period. The comparative approach of the study is designed to facilitate our understanding of how these elements were combined and the entangled evolution of their decorative motifs. The article focuses on a selected group of religious buildings situated in the core areas of Portuguese Goa. Coeval buildings and altarpieces from Salcette, Bardez, Diu, Daman and Bassein, are considered as essential sources that influenced the stylistic development under discussion. The period under study begins with the construction of the Church of Our Lady of the Divine Providence (*Nossa Senhora da Divina Providência*) in the 1656 and continues until the completion of the Church of Our Lady of Mercy (*Nossa Senhora da Piedade*) in Divar during the 1720s.

The second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is often framed as a period of political and economic decadence in the historiography of Portuguese India<sup>3</sup>. The Dutch and British domination of the commercial routes, the Maratha military expansion, and the dynastic issues within the Portuguese empire, contributed to the erosion of Asian jurisdictions formerly under Portuguese control. At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *Estado da Índia* was defensively confined to a few maritime enclaves. Even the city of Goa, the eastern capital of the empire, was experiencing a process of gradual dismantling that attests the migration of the inhabitants from the urban center to the bordering inlands<sup>4</sup>. Despite this, the period was also distinguished by the restoration of pre-existing churches, the construction of new religious buildings and flourishing artistic productions connected to these sites. Local agents played a major role in these artistic campaigns<sup>5</sup>.

Newly converted communities, confraternities and congregations became competing patrons, as did the local designers, masons and workshops that contributed to the formulation of the distinct quality of Goan baroque.

The historiographical myth of decadence also permeates the early scholarship on local art and architecture. Since the publication of the surveys by Mário Tavares Chicó and Carlos de Azevedo, prominence has been given to the artistic conjuncture that flourished between the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the early decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. This special focus was motivated by the general preconception that baroque architecture was a rhetorical degeneration of the late Renaissance canon. In contrast, recent studies in the history of Goan architecture have demonstrated the importance of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century in the formation of Goa's specific artistic identity<sup>7</sup>. On the topic of religious woodcarvings, the comprehensive works of José Meco<sup>8</sup>, Pedro Dias<sup>9</sup>, Francisco Lameira and Mónica Esteves Reis<sup>10</sup> have updated Chicó's earlier studies and the survey of the existing heritage<sup>11</sup>. In recent years, a new generation of scholars is re-evaluating the woodcarving tradition in Goa by focusing on the hybrid identity of the artworks. This new trend follows the wider debate on the colonial baroque stimulated by the *global turn* in Art History<sup>12</sup>. Some scholars have explained the problematic issue of such hybridity through the lens of trans-cultural dialogue as a process of mutual adaptation and artistic confluence resulting from the specific circumstances of the colonial encounter<sup>13</sup>. Others have mostly focused on

with non-Christian family heritage, mostly Hindu, "Brahmin origin" from *bracmanes* (subjects whose families formerly belonged to sacerdotal *jātis*), and "Chardo" (Portuguese-Konkani rendering of *ksatriya* that, in the context of Goa, turned into the family name of subjects from upper and intermediate *jātis* who converted to Catholicism). "Local" is used to refer to the whole set of these groups. When non-explicitly specified, these terms exclude other "local" agents as the study predominantly focuses on the formerly Hindu elites that converted to the Catholic faith. Other coeval terms will be used to specify the social groups that do not fall into the abovementioned categories.

<sup>3</sup> For comprehensive studies in economic and political history see: Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti N. Chaudhuri (coords.), *História da expansão portuguesa: Do Índico ao Atlântico, 1570-1697* (Lisbon: Circulo de Leitores, 1998); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700* (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 191-225, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118496459>. For the cultural perception of this phenomenon in 17<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese India, see: Nandini Chaturvedula, "Imperial excess: Corruption and decadence in Portuguese India, 1660-1706" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Pedro Dias, *História da arte portuguesa no mundo (1415-1822): O espaço do Índico* (Lisbon: Circulo de Litores, 1998), 49-53.

<sup>5</sup> By following the critical debate initiated by previous scholarship on British India, Xavier has pointed at the role of Portuguese accounts in conveying specific ideas on South Asian societies within the Western orientalist discourse: Ângela Barreto Xavier, "Languages of Difference in the Early Modern Portuguese Empire: The spread of Caste in the Indian World", *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 43, no. 2 (2016): 89-119, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/achsc.v43n2.59071>. I have decided to not include controversial terms such as "caste" and "native/indigenous" on the basis of their Eurocentric legacy. I will refer to social groups by following the terminology adopted by coeval sources on which the present study focuses. This choice is motivated by the need to report the status of these social categorization within the Portuguese colonial discourse. In this sense, "newly converted" correlates with *crístãos / naturaes da terra* (Christian subjects

<sup>6</sup> Mário Tavares Chicó, *Igrejas de Goa* (Lisbon: Junta das Missões Geográficas e de Investigação do Ultramar 1956); Carlos de Azevedo, *Arte cristã na Índia portuguesa* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigação do Ultramar, 1959).

<sup>7</sup> José Pereira, *Baroque India: The Neo-Roman Religious Architecture of South Asia* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2000); *Churches of Goa* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); José Mattoso and Walter Rossa, dirs., *Património de origem portuguesa no mundo: Arquitectura e urbanismo* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2010); Paulo Varela Gomes, *Whitewash, Red Stone: A History of Church Architecture in Goa* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> José Meco, "A talha indo-portuguesa", in *Actas do 2o Colóquio de Artes Decorativas* (Lisboa: ESAD, 2010), 1: 293-309.

<sup>9</sup> Pedro Dias, *A talha indo-portuguesa* (Porto: Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Francisco Lameira and Mónica Esteves Reis, *Retábulos no Estado de Goa* (Faro: Promontória Monográfica, 2016); *Retábulos na Província do Norte: Damão, Diu, Baçaim* (Faro: Promontória Monográfica, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Mário Tavares Chicó, *A escultura decorativa e a talha dourada nas igrejas da Índia portuguesa* (Lisbon: Tipografia da Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, 1954); *Gild Carved-work Retables of the churches of Portuguese India* (London: Connoisseur, 1959).

<sup>12</sup> Robert Harbison, "Colonial Baroque", in *Reflections on baroque* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 164-191. For a critical survey of recent scholarship: Claire Farago, "Reframing the baroque: on idolatry and the threshold of humanity", in *Rethinking the Baroque*, ed. Helen Hills (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2011), 99-122.

<sup>13</sup> Fátima Eusébio, "O intercâmbio de formas na arte indo-portuguesa: o caso específico da arte da Talha", *MÁTHESIS* 12 (2003): 57-71; Mónica Esteves Reis, "O retábulo indo-português e a miscigenação

the socio-political purposes conveyed by these arts within the asymmetrical relations of powers that characterized the colonial context of artistic production<sup>14</sup>.

The literature on the *anthropological crisis* of the 17<sup>th</sup> century helps us to frame the ideological reasons for the emergence of the local baroque style found in Portuguese Goa<sup>15</sup>. José Antonio Maravall, for instance, defined the baroque culture as a “historical structure”<sup>16</sup> resulting from the interplay of elites, institutions and social masses. According to this perspective, the baroque culture emerged in Europe (and in its colonial emanations) as a response to the crisis of the long 17<sup>th</sup> century. In this period, major changes in the global economy, the rise of new social classes, the escalation of military conflicts and the resulting social tensions created a general instability that impacted European epistemology, politics and, especially, the arts. Baroque art represents a counter-insurgency device fostered by the political elite to keep control over the masses and preserve the social hierarchy<sup>17</sup>.

The present study moves from the political viewpoint of Maravall in order to overcome the *culturalist* approach to the problem of artistic hybridization. As James Clifford has argued<sup>18</sup>, cultural hybridization is not necessarily evidence of a genuine and inclusive dialogue. Rather, hybridization, like any other cultural identity, is a conjunctural construct. What matters politically is who supports the hybrid identity and for which purposes of power<sup>19</sup>. I’ve applied the theory of cultural hegemony as outlined in the *Prison Notebooks*<sup>20</sup> by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) to the intricate context of Portuguese Goa in order to explain this special artistic conjuncture and its stylistic innovations through the pattern of social struggle for prestige and legitimation<sup>21</sup>. What Gramsci sought to understand was the

subliminal ability of the ruling classes to impose their dominance through consensus and non-coercive methods. Gramsci investigated the epistemological dimension of power; the ways in which our worldview (*senso comune*) is socially constructed and how it contributes to the preservation of the social order<sup>22</sup>. For Gramsci, dominant classes assert their power by fostering an ideology that justifies the social order and portrays it as natural and beneficial for every social class. Cultural hegemony is defined as this set of implicit norms that naturalizes the social hierarchy<sup>23</sup>. The cultural hegemony shapes the consensual agreement at the foundation of society, and, at the same time, prevents subaltern classes creating alternative narratives by fragmenting their initiatives and diminishing their authority.

Envisioning this hermeneutical problem from the perspective of cultural hegemony enables us to recover the conjunctural status of this artistic hybridity beyond binary and simplistic categories shaped on religious (Christian vs Hindu) or national markers (Portuguese vs Indian). The study employs the theory of artistic appropriation to explain the ways in which the hegemonic practices fostered by the colonial elites were reinterpreted by the local groups that emerged within the colonial hierarchy<sup>24</sup>. The heuristic benefits resulting from the application of Gramsci’s template are interpreted on the background of plural and often opposed interests that characterized the social factions within them. In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, transversal competition, conflicts and collaboration characterized the power relations between the groups involved in the artistic patronage of Portuguese India. The cultural identities that emerged within this process of negotiation are therefore considered in their shifting and intrinsically performative aspects. In this regard, the present study relies on the pivotal contribution of Paulo Varela Gomes who interpreted the development of the Goan baroque as “the affirmative artistic statement of a cultural position”<sup>25</sup>.

## 2. Enduring conflicts and fragile conjunctures: the early development of the Goan baroque

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Crown and the Roman Church began to confront each other through

iconográfica”, in *Actas do III Colóquio de Artes Decorativas – Iconografia e Fontes de Inspiração: Imagem e Memória da Gravura Europeia* (Lisbon: ESAD-FRESS, 2009), 263-74.

<sup>14</sup> Esteban Garcia Brosseau, “Dioniso en la iglesia: Un púlpito indo-portugués a la luz de la historia del arte novo-hispano”, *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 96 (2010): 37-53, <https://doi.org/10.22201/iee.18703062e.2010.96.2306>; Noadia Ochoa Rodrigues, “Nagini, Quesintuu e Umantuu: Apropriações iconográficas do “barroco colonizador”, in *Memoria del 56.º Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, Arte y patrimonio cultural* (Salamanca: Universidad Salamanca, 2018), 522-535.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Battistini, *Il barocco: Cultura, miti, immagini* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2002), 20-24; Rosario Villari, *Politica barocca: Inquietudini, mutamento e prudenza* (Bari: Laterza, 2010), 32-59.

<sup>16</sup> José Antonio Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of an Historical Structure* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 3-15.

<sup>17</sup> Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque...*, 19-53.

<sup>18</sup> James Clifford, *Strade: Viaggio e traduzione alla fine del secolo XX* (Turin: Bollati-Boringhieri, 1999), 17.

<sup>19</sup> For a general overview on the use of hybridization in the Portuguese colonial propaganda see Cláudia Castelo, *O modo português de estar no mundo: O luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1998). With regard to the role of Indo-Portuguese arts in the colonial propaganda, see Carla Alferes Pinto, “A arte ao serviço do império e das colónias: O contributo de alguns programas expositivos e museológicos para o discurso de legitimação territorial”, *Midas, Museus e Estudos Interdisciplinares* 6 (2016), 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.4000/midas.957>.

<sup>20</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 4 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1977).

<sup>21</sup> For studies that apply Gramsci’s categories of subalternity and hegemony to the social context of 17<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese India, see Ângela Barreto Xavier, *A invenção de Goa: Poder imperial e conversões culturais nos séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2008); Paolo Aranha, “Early Modern Asian Ca-

tholicism and European Colonialism: Dominance, Hegemony and Native Agency in the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*”, in *Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity*, ed. Klaus Koschorke and Johannes Meier (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), 285-305. Ines Zupanov has claimed the importance of Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony in her analysis of grotesque subjects in the pulpit art of Portuguese India: Ines G. Zupanov, “The Pulpit Trap: Possession and Personhood in Colonial Goa”, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 65-66 (2015): 298-315, <https://doi.org/10.1086/691041>.

<sup>22</sup> Gramsci, *Quaderni...*, 1250.

<sup>23</sup> Gramsci, 2279.

<sup>24</sup> Robert S. Nelson, “Appropriation”, in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 61-62, <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226571690.001.0001>; Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 79-90, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315023267>; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, “Ranges of Response: Asian Appropriations of European Art and Culture”, in *The Globalization of Renaissance Art*, ed. Daniel Savoy (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 95-127, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004355798\\_006](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004355798_006).

<sup>25</sup> Gomes, *Whitewash...*, 6.

the local institutes appointed to supervise missionary activity<sup>26</sup>. A jurisdictional conflict emerged between the Portuguese *Padroado Real* and the Roman Institute of *Propaganda Fide*. When the Institute was created in 1622 the traditional right of the Kings of Portugal in religious matters was not revoked creating overlapping authority on essential issues including the erection of dioceses, the construction of new churches and the control over the missions<sup>27</sup>. The missions were established in Portuguese India under the mandate of the conversion policy introduced by John III (1502-1557) as part of a wider reformulation of the Portuguese presence in India from maritime to terrestrial expansion. It was thought that religious uniformity would enlarge subject audiences, thus ensuring stronger imperial control over the colonies<sup>28</sup>.

By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the local secular clergy began to accumulate influence over the core territories in Goa<sup>29</sup>. A consistent part of secular clergymen belonged to former Brahmanical *jātis* who collectively converted to the Catholic faith from the 1540s onwards. The religious conversion took place as a collective response of local elites to maintain their leading position within the social hierarchy<sup>30</sup>. The regular orders and local clergy were intrinsically connected as the formation of the secular clergy depended on the seminaries of the missionary orders<sup>31</sup>. From the newly converted groups' point of view, an ecclesiastical career was one of the main social devices that facilitated integration within the colonial society. Yet, the Tridentine dispositions on the study of local languages for preaching purposes made the local seminarists an essential resource within the colleges of the regular orders<sup>32</sup>. The ambitions of the local secular clergy suddenly became apparent in the 1650s following the controversial events connected to Matheus de Castro (1594-1677), a Brahmin origin Catholic priest who received his formation at the Franciscan college of the

*Reis Magos* in Goa<sup>33</sup>. His career achievements triggered the ambition of the Goan clergy who saw *Propaganda Fide* as a strategic ally. Castro's writings defending the Brahmin origin clerics against the regular orders (especially the Jesuits) played a crucial role in motivating the statements made by the Holy See and *Propaganda Fide* in 1658, which openly accused the regular orders of discriminating against local clergymen<sup>34</sup>.

This tense situation was further challenged by the arrival of the Theatine order. The Theatines reached Portuguese India under the supervision of *Propaganda Fide* and intended to expand missionary activity into the bordering lands of Islamic Deccan<sup>35</sup>. However, the creation of the *Bijapur and Idalcan Vicariate* in 1637 did not have the desired effect in terms of evangelization, although it did pave the way for *Propaganda Fide* to expand its influence on the political issues of Portuguese India. The foundation of the Theatine Church of Our Lady of the Divine Providence (1656-1661) represented a clear statement of difference within the artistic and religious environment of Goa. The building of the church commenced in 1656 after a long jurisdictional battle between the *Padroado* and the Theatines over its construction. Carlo Ferrarini, head of the mission in Goa, designed the model while the lay brother Francesco Maria Milazzo supervised the construction<sup>36</sup>. The church has a centralized square plan incorporating the layout of a Greek cross. As Rafael Moreira has shown<sup>37</sup>, the design was based on the Church of the *Madonna della Ghiara* in Reggio Emilia, Ferrarini's hometown. The church represents a unique example of this plan in Portuguese India and is, significantly, the first church covered by a square plan dome where the drum and lantern rest upon four arches supported by pillars (Fig. 1).

The arms of the cross are covered by rectangular groin vaults, while the four corner spaces resulting from the Greek cross composition are covered by squared groin vaults. The chancel displays octagonal divisions and a semi-hemispherical vault with penetrations. The later addition of the western façade (1673-1675), which is inspired

<sup>26</sup> Pius Malekandathil, "Cross, Sword and Conflicts: A Study of the Political Meanings of the Struggle Between the *Padroado Real* and the *Propaganda Fide*", *Studies in History* 27, no. 2 (2011): 251-267, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0257643012459418>.

<sup>27</sup> This tension was further exacerbated by the *Restoration War* (1640-1668) in which the Habsburgs opposed the House of Braganza whose claims for the throne of Portugal were considered illegitimate by Rome.

<sup>28</sup> Ângela Barreto Xavier, "Aparejo y disposición para criar un otro novo mundo: A conversão dos indianos e o projecto imperial joanino", in *Congresso D. João III* (Lisbon: CEPCEP-Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2003), 784-805.

<sup>29</sup> Starting with the early dispositions of the Archbishop Aleixo de Menezes (1595-1609) who appointed local clergymen in the parish churches of Divar, Chorão e Santo Estevão, the local clergy began to emancipate themselves from the patronizing influence of the regular orders. A record of the *Propaganda Fide* attests that by 1655 the local clergy administered the majority of the parish churches on the Goan islands: Carlos Mercês de Mello, *The Recruitment and Formation of the Native Clergy in India, 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1955), 146-156.

<sup>30</sup> Ângela Barreto Xavier, "Dissolver a diferença: Conversão e mestiçagem no império português", in *Itinerários: A investigação nos 25 Anos do ICS*, eds. Manuel Villaverde, Karin Wall, Sofia Aboim and Filipe Carreira da Silva (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2008), 709-727.

<sup>31</sup> Mello, *The Recruitment and Formation*, 143.

<sup>32</sup> Maria do Céu Fonseca, *Historiografia linguística portuguesa e missionária: Proposições e posposições no século XVII* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Frustrated by opposition to his attempts to achieve higher ecclesiastical ranks, Castro left Goa for Rome in 1625. There, he established strong ties with the Congregation of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri, Cardinal Francesco Barberini (1597-1679) and Francesco Ignoli (1578-1649), Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*. Thanks to these powerful protectors, Castro was sent to India three times in the following twenty years: first as protonotary apostolic (1633), and later as vicar apostolic (1636). In 1654, Bardez county in Goa was threatened by a joint attack from the Dutch and the Sultanate of Bijapur. It seems likely that Castro took part in organizing local upheavals that preceded the attack. The rebellion's failed attempts forced Castro to leave Goa in 1656. Once in Rome, he wrote the *Espelho dos Bracmanes* (The Mirror of Brahmins), the first treatise aimed at dignifying the aristocratic lineage of the Brahmin origin Christians. For a detailed account of Castro's life see Giuseppe Sorge, *Matteo de Castro (1594-1677) profilo di una figura emblematica del conflitto giurisdizionale tra Goa e Roma nel secolo XVII* (Bologna: Clueb, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> Mello, *The Recruitment and Formation*, 150.

<sup>35</sup> Anne Kroell, "Missions théatines à Golconde au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle", in *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 101-102 (1989): 911-923, <https://doi.org/10.3406/mefr.1989.4070>.

<sup>36</sup> Pereira, *Baroque India*, 200-217.

<sup>37</sup> Rafael Moreira, "Riflessi della Ghiara nell'India portoghese: La chiesa dei teatini a Goa", in *Estratti del convegno La basilica della Ghiara: Il miracolo della città* (Reggio Emilia: Comitato per le celebrazioni del IV centenario della Basilica della Madonna della Ghiara, 1997), n/p.



Figure 1. View from the interior, Church of Our Lady of the Divine Providence, Old Goa, 1656-1661. Source: ©Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

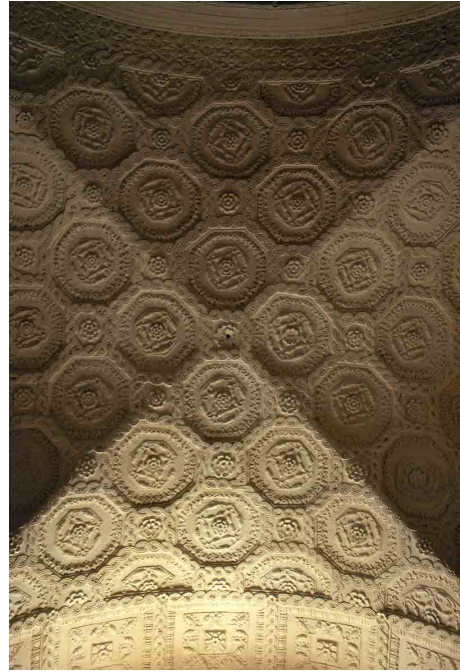


Figure 2. Detail of the stuccoed coffers, Church of Our Lady of the Divine Providence, Old Goa, 1656-1661. Source: ©Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

by that of Saint Peter in Rome, ultimately reinforced the Italian appearance of the church. The proximity of the building to the palace of the Viceroy suggests the competitive climate that motivated the erection of the church.

The groin vaults of the interior are decorated with large stucco coffers displaying a uniform repetition of entirely whitewashed floral and prismatic patterns (Fig. 2). The same decoration recurs on the capitals of the pilasters, on the cornice frieze and the arches. These innovative features, both in architecture and ornamental techniques, were anticipated by the slightly earlier construction of the new sacristy of the *Basilica of Bom Jesus*, a building closely related to the Divine Providence in terms of patronage and design<sup>38</sup>. Shell-shaped moldings adorn the dome of the chancel and the pendentifs, stucco cartouches with phytomorphic trails, flowery jars, fan-shaped motifs and rope moldings decorate the vaults, the arches, the windows' frames, the coffers of the chancel and its lateral niches (Fig. 3). The variety of these moldings is a unique feature of the sacristy as later buildings display a wider use of stucco decoration but less various in terms of iconography.

The style of the decoration follows Flemish sources that were already evident in the façade of the church (1597), and in the coeval façades of Jesuit churches in Portuguese Gujarat. The stucco decoration featured in the sacristy of the *Bom Jesus* and the Divine Providence had a pivotal impact on the decorative program of fol-

lowing religious buildings, including the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament in the Cathedral (1650s), the frescoed coffers of the Franciscan Church of the Holy Spirit in Old Goa (1661), the Holy Spirit Church in Margão (1675) and the Chapel of Saint Anthony (1680). The introduction of the groin vault with lateral penetrations possibly influenced the development of whitewashed stuccos and polychrome woodcarvings. This new architectural element is lighter than the previously used barrel



Figure 3. Vault with stucco decorations, sacristy of the Basilica of the Bom Jesus, Old Goa, 1652-1659. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.

<sup>38</sup> The sacristy was built between 1652 and 1659. The major financier was Baltazar de Veiga, a rich Goan merchant who also took part in sponsoring the construction of the Divine Providence. According to Gomes, the architectural and decorative analogies between these churches indicate the involvement of Ferrarini and Milazzo in the design and construction campaign. Gomes, *Whitewash...*, 115.

vault since the weight of the ceiling is concentrated on selected points, thus enabling the opening of windows above the cornice, the erection of domes, and the overall elevation of the entablature. It improved the luminosity of the building that, in combination with the brightness of relatively cheap material such as whitewash and polychrome woods, exalted the over-all perception of the space and its decorative program with minimal costs.

The Divine Providence also represents a turning point in the evolution of wooden altarpieces. The church incorporates seven altarpieces; one on the main altar (renovated around 1710) and three for each side of the naves (ca. 1675, Fig. 4). Reis identified the side retables of the Theatine church as the pioneering examples of the following developments in Goan wooden altarpieces<sup>39</sup>. Wooden *retablos* are traditional elements of the religious architecture of Portuguese India clearly derived from Iberian prototypes<sup>40</sup>. In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the massive evangelization of the colonies gave impulse to the local production of woodcarvings<sup>41</sup>.



Figure 4. Altar dedicated to Saint Cajetan, Church of Our Lady of the Divine Providence Old Goa, 1675 ca. Source: ©Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

<sup>39</sup> Lameira and Reis, *Retábulos no Estado*, 35, 117.

<sup>40</sup> Historical sources confirm the shipping of retablos and pulpits from Europe to India as early as the first half of the 16th century. Mobile wooden altarpieces were originally produced in Flanders and later in Lisbon: Pedro Dias, “Retábulos indo-portugueses da Renascença ao início do Barroco”, in *Arte indo-portuguesa* (Coimbra: Almedina, 2004), 295-322.

<sup>41</sup> The presence of local guilds for carpenters and woodcarvers is well documented in Goa, Chaul, Bassein, Tane and Diu, which were all important centers for the production of inlaid furniture for the European market: Pedro Dias, *Mobiliário indo-portugues* (Imaginalis: Coimbra, 2013). Artistic interaction is also confirmed by the records of the Provincial Councils of Goa and royal dispositions that repeatedly prohibited local artists from working on Christian subjects unless they had converted to the Catholic faith. The Provincial Council in 1606 allowed the artistic interaction under exceptional circumstances: Dias, *História da arte portuguesa no mundo*, 101, 262.

The side altarpieces of the Divine Providence consist of a single structure organized in three levels. Until the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, wooden altarpieces were mostly structured in three parts. This composition served the narrative purposes of the iconography which, in turn, reflects the process of religious instruction taking place in Portuguese India in that time. In contrast, the side altarpieces in the Divine Providence display a predominantly devotional focus given by the single theme of the composition<sup>42</sup>. The pedestals are divided into six sections that support two groups of Solomonic columns, three for each side of the altarpiece, with central column placed in a slightly forward position. The lower section of the columns is decorated with a helicoidal groove alternating with a pearl-rows motif. Putti and birds within grapevine trellises decorate the upper part of the columns. This decoration was also employed in coeval altarpieces from Portuguese Gujarat made after earlier Iberian examples, thus showing a possible pattern of transmission of these metropolitan models<sup>43</sup>. Reis has pointed out that this specific type of columns recurs in the illustrated treatises of the Theatine architect Guarino Guarini (1624-1683)<sup>44</sup>. Other models from Guarini’s works began to feature religious woodcarving in this period, including the octagonal-section column with squared surfaces. This peculiar positioning of the columns replaced the previous composition with one or two Corinthian columns flanking the central icon. Corinthian capitals support the attic that follows the same composition of the pedestal. Urns, pinnacles and statues are depicted in the attic, which also incorporates a central niche flanked by two Solomonic columns on each side. The space between the two groups of Solomonic columns houses either a painting or a shell-shaped niche containing a statue. When the niche has been used in the central part of the altarpiece, the painting appears on the upper one, and vice versa. The predominance of sculptural elements on the painted ones, is a distinct feature of this period that attests to the flourishing of woodcarving workshops. The surfaces have been decorated with floral motifs on a gilded background that testify the earliest evidence of the hyper-decorative explosion featured in later examples. As in the case of the stucco moldings, the decorative grammar relinquishes its figural variety in favor of more uniform phytomorphic patterns. The predominance of the ornamental aspect explains the floral imprint of the iconographies. Prior to this, the decorative motifs had typically been made after Italo-Flemish prototypes including cartouches, figural hybrids, opulent garlands and angel heads that rhythmically marked out the space. These late-mannerist decorations were arranged in accordance with the geometric organization of the architectural elements. In contrast, the period under discussion is distinguished by the arrangement of the architectural elements according to their decorative effects.

The devotional focus of this altarpiece’s model followed a wider change in liturgical furnishing that was connected to the Holy Sacrament cult. In post-Triden-

<sup>42</sup> Dias, 96.

<sup>43</sup> Lameira and Reis, *Retábulos na Província*, 49-50; Eusébio, “O intercâmbio de formas”, 66.

<sup>44</sup> Lameira and Reis, 34-35, 41-42.

tine period, the emphasis on the Eucharist led to preference for Eucharistic altarpieces over other typologies. It was only from the 1660s onwards that altarpieces, which originally incorporated removable tabernacles and host containers, began to display the so-called *camarin*: an open chamber accessed through a window that occupies the central part of the structure<sup>45</sup>. The pioneering example for the monumental *camarin* of the Goan baroque is provided by the main altarpiece of the Franciscan Church of the Holy Spirit in Old Goa (1661, *Espírito Santo*) whose renovation began in the very same year of the Divine Providence was completed (Fig. 5).



Figure 5. Nave and main altarpiece, Church of the Franciscan Convent of the Holy Spirit, Old Goa, 1661. Source: ©Fundação Mário Soares e Maria Barroso / Mário e Alice Chicó, [http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms\\_dc\\_121812](http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_121812)

Given the architectural similarities in the vault system of the two churches, Moreira has suggested<sup>46</sup> that the architect was Francesco Maria Milazzo, who left the Theatines for the Franciscan order in 1661. The meaningful innovations introduced by the Theatines intersected the claims of the newly converted groups as demonstrated by the debate on the administration of the Holy Sacrament. Until the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the newly converted were prohibited from administering the Holy Communion. Participation in this ritual was pivotal within colonial society as the religious ceremonies re-

affirmed class distinctions. Traditionally, displaying the Holy Sacrament was a right reserved for high-ranking confraternities of *fidalgos* of Portuguese origin (*reinóis*). Antonio Ardizzone Spinola (1609-1697), preeminent Theatine preacher in Goa, aligned himself with the newly converted on this liturgical issue<sup>47</sup>.

Once again, this case shows how the people that reached Goa within the Theatine mission marked a set of discontinuities in the artistic and religious dimensions. Innovative architectural techniques, new interior decorations and significant changes in the altarpieces' design were adapted to previous circumstances, as well as rapidly adopted by other missionary orders. The interplay between the Theatines and the other regular orders (especially the Jesuits), as well as the dynamics of competition leading to unexpected shifts, demonstrate the multicentric development of these elements and question the idea of monolithic factions that were rather informed by individual and often contradictory aims. Nonetheless, if observed in their long-term development, each of these exchanges reflected the positioning of the religious groups within the conflictful conjuncture of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. In this period, the jurisdictional conflict represented a global framework encompassing several inter-ecclesiastical and social conflicts that took place at the local level. The local clergy became an essential element in this struggle as an emerging social group that strategically allied with one faction or another according to the benefits that could be obtained in any given situation. As we will see in the next paragraph, the artistic innovations introduced in this period were appropriated and re-interpreted by a new generation of artists and intellectuals belonging to the newly converted communities.

### 3. Towards the discursive and stylistic appropriations of the local clergy

The tensions between the archbishopric, *Propaganda Fide*, the Viceroy and the missionary orders, continued to characterize the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>48</sup>. A major achievement for the converted elites was represented by the creation of the *Miraculous Cross* in 1682, the first regular congregation established by South Asian clergymen. In 1685, the congregation adopted the Oratorian rule of Saint Philip Neri, an established ally of *Propaganda Fide*. Similarly, Chardo clerics created the *Congregation of the Tertiary Carmelites* in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. These congregations ended to fill the void left by the expulsion of the Jesuits and the Discalced Carmelites. The increasing influence of local agents is also attested by the engagement of the rural communities (*comunidades*) in artistic patronage. Tombstones, inscriptions and commission documents record the increasing stature of local patrons<sup>49</sup> (*Gaunkars*). The same trend is

<sup>45</sup> On the evolution of the Iberian models during this period see: Robert Smith, *A talha em Portugal* (Lisbon: Horizonte, 1962), 54-58, 104-106, 121-122; José Meo, "As artes decorativas", in *História da Arte em Portugal: O Manierismo*, ed. Vítor Serrão (Lisbon: Alfa, 1986), 156-157. For earlier examples of this element in Portuguese India: Gomes, *Whitewash...*, 128-130.

<sup>46</sup> Moreira, "Riflessi della Ghiara", n/p.

<sup>47</sup> Ana Isabel López-Salazar, "De la teología a la crítica social: Preludios antirracistas en la Goa barroca", *Ler História* 75 (2019): 157-177, <https://doi.org/10.4000/lerhistoria.5859>.

<sup>48</sup> Mello, *The Recruitment and Formation*, 176-178.

<sup>49</sup> Gomes, *Whitewash...*, 5.

evidenced by devotional altarpieces commissioned by local confraternities for buildings under the administration of the regular orders<sup>50</sup>. The local confraternities were often structured according to preexisting community associations. For instance, *Gaunkars* gathered in the so-called *mazanias*<sup>51</sup> (*mahajan*); devotional associations organized around temples' founders. In turn, the *mazanias* were connected to the *fabricas*, the workshops that flourished thanks to the construction and renovation of religious buildings.

The ambitions of the secular clergy are particularly evident in the development of apologetic treatises that aimed to dignify one local group over the others. Following the example of Castro's *Espelho*, an interesting amount of this kind of literature began to circulate in the imperial network during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and continued throughout the following one. As in the case of the competition that opposed the local congregations, this literature reflects an "inter-castist"<sup>52</sup> struggle for social prestige and political legitimation. This polemic literature also attests to the diversified social context of Portuguese India, where social and religious memberships were reinterpreted according to the changing political scenario. Francisco do Rego (1638-1689) and António João de Frias (1674-1727) are amongst the most representative authors of this polemical literature and are also interesting figures in the context of art history. Both were Catholic priests of Brahmin origin from Talaulim (Goa) who completed their education in Portugal. Both became quite popular because their apologetic writings aimed to dignify the clergy of Brahmin origin<sup>53</sup>. Rego and Frias also supervised the renovation works of the parish churches where they were in charge. The architectural and decorative solutions displayed by these two churches are quintessential landmarks in the mature development of the Goan baroque style.

The Church of Saint Anne in Talaulim (*Santana*) was originally founded by the Jesuits in 1577. Local secular clergymen started to administer the building at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The renovation of the church was started by Francisco do Rego in 1682 and completed in 1689 under the direction of father António Francisco da Cunha, another priest of Brahmin origin from Talaulim. The church displays a synthesis of several innovations that appeared in the Goan religious architecture in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>54</sup>. The building consists of a single nave with semi-circular niches separated by pilasters and a transept covered with barrel vaults with lateral penetra-

tions (Fig. 6); all elements inspired by the Jesuit Church of the Holy Spirit in Margão (*Espírito Santo*, Figs. 7 and 8). The elevation is organized in three superimposed levels with a gallery above the semi-circular niches' order and a clerestory running above the gallery (Fig. 9). This division into more levels is similar to the Jesuit Church of Saint Paul in Diu, the Franciscan Church of the Holy Spirit in Old Goa and, lastly, the Divine Providence<sup>55</sup>.



Figure 6. Church of Saint Anne, Talaulim, 1682-1689. Source: ©Fundação Mário Soares e Maria Barroso / Mário e Alice Chicó, [http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms\\_dc\\_121190](http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_121190)



Figure 7. Church of the Holy Spirit, Margão, 1675. Source: ©Fundação Mário Soares e Maria Barroso / Mário e Alice Chicó, [http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms\\_dc\\_125319](http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_125319)

<sup>50</sup> Lameira and Reis, *Retábulos no Estado*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira and Antonio Victor Couto, *Goa: Hindu temples and deities* (Panaji: Printwell Press, 1978), 27.

<sup>52</sup> For instance, the *Espada de David contra o Goliath do Bramanismo* (beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century circa) by João da Cunha Jacques and the *Promptuario Indico* (Lisbon, 1702) by Leonardo Paes, are representative of the response of the Chardo clerics to the clergymen of Brahmin lineage: Ângela Barreto Xavier, "David contra Goliath na Goa seiscentista e setecentista. Escrita identitária e colonização interna", *Ler História* 49 (2005): 107-147, here 111.

<sup>53</sup> See the *Tratado Apologetico contra varias calumnias impostas pela malevolencia contra a sua nação bracmana* by Rego, an apologetic treatise that was circulated within the Portuguese erudite milieu, and the *Aureola dos Índios e Nobiliaria Bracmane* by Frias, published in Lisbon in 1702.

<sup>54</sup> Pereira, *Churches of Goa*, 81.

<sup>55</sup> Gomes, *Whitewash...*, 145-146.

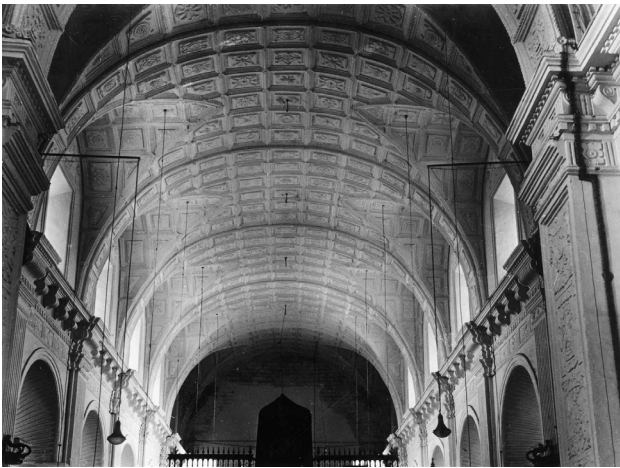


Figure 8. Vault of nave from sanctuary, Church of the Holy Spirit, Margão, 1675. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.



Figure 9. Right wall of the nave, Church of Saint Anne, Talaulim, 1682-1689. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.

The vault system combined with the three levels of the elevation improved the luminosity of the building, thus having a direct impact on the decorative program. Stucco coffers with large floral designs decorate the vault system and the chancel (Fig. 10). The side niches display the shell-shape motif that already appeared in the sacristy of the *Bom Jesus*, but here they are also framed by elaborate floral patterns (Fig. 11). A distinguished palmette motif features on the capitals of the pilasters that separate the niches, and on the frieze of the second level. The entablature of the gallery, inspired by the Holy Spirit in Margão, follows the Ionic order but here the compressed proportions of the pilasters, the rich moldings of the frames, stuccoed pinnacles and two Solomonic columns on each side

of the interior balconies, ultimately convey a denser articulation of the ornaments (Fig. 12). The same decorative effect is given by the façade where pilasters, topping motifs and columns are similarly compressed and duplicated. Richly carved capitals, geometric moldings, and wheel-wedge motifs enrich the decorative effect of the building. It is important to note that these decorative innovations are not only new in terms of quantity. The proportions of the stuccoed architectural elements (columns, pilasters) show striking analogies with the woodcarving technique.



Figure 10. Vault of nave from sanctuary, Church of Saint Anne, Talaulim, 1682-1689. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.



Figure 11. Three levels of the elevation, Church of Saint Anne, Talaulim, 1682-1689. Source: ©Fundação Mário Soares e Maria Barroso / Mário e Alice Chicó, [http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms\\_dc\\_121192](http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_121192)



Figure 12. Detail of the gallery, Church of Saint Anne, Talaulim, 1682-1689. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.

The moldings display a previously unseen sculptural materiality which is particularly visible in the treatment of floral subjects framed by waved patterns and in the ribbon-like braided bands, both elements that recall decorative techniques derived from local metal works and textile art<sup>56</sup>. We find the intermix of European-origin moldings displaying a small flower framed by different shapes: elongated rays-like petals, spiral-like corollas, star-like motifs made of eight stems with leaf, intricate patterns with geometric circles mimicking the shape of a flower. This rich compendium also encompasses the repetition of large flowers with a double corolla of pointed petals that recall the iconography of the lotus flower. Despite the numerous iconoclastic campaigns conducted from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the extant artistic remains of the pre-colonial heritage confirm the correlation of this iconography within the Hindu artistic traditions of the late Kadamba period. The schist-stone carvings in the shape of a lotus flower that decorate the ceilings of the *mandapa* and the *antarāla* of the Mahadeva Temple at Tambdi Surla (12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries), or a comparable element in the earlier Mahadeva Temple at Curdi (11<sup>th</sup> century), provide a strong framework of visual references<sup>57</sup>. Further stylistic analogies can be observed in the rows of smaller flowers with four pointed petals that have been carved at the entrance of the *garbhagriha* and on the external walls of the temple at Tambdi Surla. The resilience of these pre-colonial models within the newly converted communities is confirmed by a stone panel in the shape of lotus flower from the late Kadamba period that has been preserved

<sup>56</sup> Eusébio, “O intercâmbio de formas”, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Viñal Raghavendra Mitragotri, *A Socio-cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 249.

in a chapel of Our Lady of the Mercy’s cemetery<sup>58</sup>, the church whose António João de Frias was initially in charge. This prestigious motif, which survived in the decorative repertoire of local material culture, kept a strong connection to previous cults, community narratives and religious sites. By a comparative look into the woodcarving repertoire, lotus flower motifs were consistently more present in Jesuits and Franciscans commissions in Portuguese Gujarat between 1580s and 1630s, and only in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century they started to be widely used in Goa following the floral turn of the decorations analyzed in the previous paragraph<sup>59</sup>. It seems likely that the introduction of Italo-Flemish floral subjects, and their later baroque development, created the most suitable conditions for the lotus flower of being integrated into the ornamental program of Catholic buildings. See, for instance, the juxtaposition of European floral moldings with a *V* motif decorated with crosses and ears of corn, and the lotus flower moldings that rather display phytomorphic decorations in the same place (Fig. 13).



Figure 13. Detail of stucco moldings, Church of Saint Anne, Talaulim, 1682-1689. Source: ©HPIP. Photo by Walter Rossa, 2017.

The nave displays a deep chancel covered with a barrel vault with penetrations. Here we find a polychrome wooden altarpiece commissioned in 1695 (Fig. 14). The woodwork follows the model introduced by the

<sup>58</sup> The remains are part of the former Ganapati Temple on whose site the church has been built: Pereira, Couto, *Goa: Hindu temples*, 47.

<sup>59</sup> For early evidence of the lotus motif in the woodcarving tradition of Portuguese Gujarat, see Mónica Esteves Reis, “A arte retabular da Companhia de Jesus em Damão: Focando o Retábulo de Nossa Senhora com o Menino na sacristia da Igreja de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios”, *Revista de História da Arte e Arqueologia* 11 (2009): 37-54.

Theatines incorporating pedestals that are divided into six sections which support two groups of three Solomonic columns and the attic. The central niche in the attic is flanked by two Solomonic columns on each side. The central part of the altarpiece displays a large *camarin* chamber where the tabernacle is kept. The work is decorated with intricate trellises, the repetition of large lotus flowers and pearl rows that recall the crochet-like moldings of the chancel (see the correspondence between the Ionic cornice of the chancel and that of the altarpiece).



Figure 14. Sanctuary and side altars, Church of Saint Anne, Talaulim, 1682-1689. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.

Ten years after the conclusion of Saint Anne, António João de Frias began to supervise the construction of the Church of Our Lady of the Mercy in Divar<sup>60</sup> (Fig. 15). The churches display meaningful similarities in terms of architecture and decorative program although the *Piedade* has a more monumental outlook. Unlike the side niches of Saint Anne, Our Lady of the Mercy displays a single nave plan with inter-communicating lateral chapels, a model already seen in the Cathedral and Our Lady of the Grace. The churches also differ in the elevation as Our lady of the Mercy has only a single gallery running above the side chapels. The inter-communicating chapels and the superimposed gallery allowed for the erection of eight square groin vaults that improved the width of the elevation. The spacious effect of the interior is also enhanced by the majestic size of the stuccos. The carving style of the moldings (see the traditional pearl-row motif) and the Ionic freezes of the cornice are the same as in Saint Anne but the overall proportions are larger, for instance in the Solomonic columns with elongated capitals that adorn the nave or the large coffers that completely decorate the vaults. The flowery iconographies that recur on the metopes framing the arches of the chapels and the large lotus flowers at the upper corners are directly derived from those at Saint

Anne (Fig. 16). Our lady of the Mercy is also furnished with five impressive gilded retablos, one in the main altar, two in the transept and two in the lateral chapels<sup>61</sup>. The main altarpiece was made around 1700, while the others were most likely commissioned in the 1720s. The composition follows the model previously analyzed. The stylistic uniformity of these pieces suggests a clear continuity in the commission and design. As in the case of Saint Anne, meaningful analogies can be observed in the decoration of the Ionic cornice of the altarpieces and in the cornice of the elevation.



Figure 15. Church of Our Lady of the Mercy, Divar, 1699-1727. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.



Figure 16. Clerestory window, left wall of nave, Church of Our Lady of the Mercy, Divar, 1699-1727. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.

<sup>60</sup> Pereira, *Churches of Goa...*, 84-86.

<sup>61</sup> Meco, "A talha indo-portuguesa...", 294-300.

The pioneering role of Saint Anne and the Mercy in the articulation of a local decorative style is demonstrated by the ornamental programs of later churches that were financed by local communities, such as the decoration of the façade, the chancel and the two orders of side niches in the Church of Our Lady of the Refuge in Mandur (*Nossa Senhora do Amparo*, 1710, Fig. 17).



Figure 17. Stucco decoration, left wall of the chancel, Church of Our lady of the Refuge, Mandur, 1710. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.

#### 4. Baroque as hegemonic practice and its local appropriations

The theory of cultural hegemony represents a useful methodological resource for interpreting the discursive emergence of the Goan clergy and its stylistic outputs in art. Within the multitude of topics addressed by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*, special attention has been given to the hegemonic role of the Catholic Church within Italian history. According to Gramsci, the Roman Church had been the only political force able to maintain an ideological unity between dominant and subaltern classes<sup>62</sup>. The Church's efforts have always been focused on keeping the highly sophisticated culture of the elites and the popular devotion of the social masses within a coherent doctrinal framework. Every time this unity was broken, heretical movements fragmented the ecclesiastical structure<sup>63</sup>. From the Counter-Reformation onwards, the preservation of ideological unity relied on the combined use of repressive policies that reinforced the control over the intellectuals and massive propaganda campaigns addressed to the social masses<sup>64</sup>. The regular orders that emerged during the Counter-Reformation were particularly important to this strategy for social cohesion<sup>65</sup>. For Gramsci, every ruling class *organically*

creates a group of intellectuals appointed with the task of articulating, preserving and reproducing the cultural hegemony. The organic intellectual "gives his class homogeneity and awareness of its own function, in the economic field and on the social and political levels"<sup>66</sup>.

Using Gramsci's definition, we can interpret the regular orders of Portuguese India as the intellectual class generated by the development of the colonial elites. As organic intellectuals, the missionaries were the social group appointed with the task of legitimizing the colonial conquest and the leading position of the colonial elites within the social hierarchy. This legitimizing work was specifically addressed to the subaltern groups whose consensus was indispensable to ensure the stability of the social order. Religious conversion, therefore, embodied a practice of cultural hegemony; the cooptation of the local groups into the political vision of the colonial elites<sup>67</sup>.

As we have seen, the local society was far from uniformly subaltern. Rather, it was diversified and characterized by preexisting hierarchies. Some of these groups entered the colonial hierarchy by maintaining a privileged position. The status of local elites recalls the Gramscian use of the term "allied"<sup>68</sup> (*alleati* or *affini*); those social groups who are strategically associated with the dominant ones and towards whom the dominant hegemony is firstly exercised. The newly converted elites soon began to foster their own discursive practices by assimilating and re-interpreting the hegemonic strategies of the colonial and missionary elites. Local clergymen were crucial agents within this process. In Gramsci's terminology, we can say that Rego and Frias were *organic to their social class*. Their function was to express the potentiality of the newly converted elites which, in turn, gained increasing predominance within the colonial economy<sup>69</sup>. This is particularly evident in the creation of local congregations that enabled the local clergy to conduct their evangelization independently from other orders, thus enlarging their cultural hegemony over the Goan rural communities. The discursive and stylistic formulations of the newly converted groups never marked clear discontinuities from those of the traditional elites, but, at the same time, they didn't result into a passive reproduction of the dominant discourse. The mismatch between these dimensions suggests that strategies of cultural appropriation occurred. Artistic appropriation consists in those multifarious processes of adaptation, re-purposing and resignification of iconographies through the formal adherence to authorized models. Colonial Goa was characterized by a strict social

<sup>62</sup> Gramsci, 1513-1514.

<sup>63</sup> Xavier, *A invenção de Goa...*, 19-27.

<sup>64</sup> Gramsci, *Quaderni...*, 2010. Here Gramsci enlightens the difference between dominion and leadership. The former term is intended as the kind of power relation ensured by repression while the latter encompasses moral and intellectual aspects related to the concept of cultural hegemony. The power relation between dominant and "allied" groups falls into the second category.

<sup>65</sup> Teotónio De Souza, "Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of Goan Economy in 17<sup>th</sup> century", *Indica* 12, no. 2 (1975): 27-35; Geoffrey V. Scammell, "The Pillars of Empire: Indigenous Assistance and the Survival of the 'Estado da Índia' c. 1600-1700", *Modern Asia Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988): 473-489, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X0000963X>.

<sup>62</sup> Gramsci, *Quaderni...*, 81, 1070, 1380-1383, 1396, 1863-1864.

<sup>63</sup> Gramsci, 126.

<sup>64</sup> Gramsci, 116-117, 809, 945.

<sup>65</sup> Gramsci, 422, 917-918.

compartmentation, various levels of cultural censorship and violent policies aimed at implementing the religious uniformity. In the artistic field, strong authorized models were disseminated against the background of these repressive practices. These models restricted the range of possibilities for local elites to develop alternative narratives on a formal level, but not on an allusive one.

Gramsci's emphasis on ideological unity and subaltern consensus resonates with the theory of "defensive integration"<sup>70</sup> put forward by Maravall, who interpreted the baroque culture as a technique of persuasion that aimed to integrate the social masses into the discursive practices of the elites<sup>71</sup>. The problem for artists and intellectuals was how to efficiently communicate the complex set of dogmas that justified the natural and social order. The baroque aesthetic emerged to simplify the communication of the dogmatic system through techniques of emotional persuasion. As a result, the salvation of the believers did not depend on the comprehensive knowledge of the dogmas but rather on the conformity of their behavior to them. Gramsci's writings on the ideological unity provide further insights into the behavioral effect of the baroque persuasion. According to Gramsci, Catholic propaganda, which is characterized by impressive public functions and ostentatious cults, establishes a "purely mechanic contact, an outer unity"<sup>72</sup> between the elites and the believers' mass. The mechanic and outward aspect of this relation shall not be interpreted as superficial. By using these terms, Gramsci aimed to signify the behavioral nature of this power-relation based on the *formal deference* given by the social masses to the authority of the Church.

The formal nature of this dynamic is particularly useful when applied to understand the decorative innovations introduced by the church of Saint Anne. The lotus flower motif represents an emblematic case of cultural appropriation that tells us something about the formal adherence to authorized models and the parallel co-existence of alternative narratives. The integration of this symbol into the decorative program of Catholic buildings was facilitated by the ornamental status of floral subjects that began to feature baroque moldings and altarpieces in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The neutrality of this motif in terms of figural content, its ornamental coherence and approximate resemblance to coeval European motifs, stand as essential reasons that motivated the original use of the lotus flower emblem in Saint Anne's decorative idiom. Aside the issues of religious commensurability and accommodation that have been debated

by previous scholarship, the lotus flower motif questions here the boundaries that separate visibility from non-explicitly manifested meanings, emulation from dissimulation, authorized models from transgressive practices, ornamental from symbolical function.

The outer nature of baroque persuasion also explains the preeminent role played by the audience in the function of the buildings. Maravall fostered the term "dynamic guidance controlling by activity"<sup>73</sup> to explain the special governance initiated in the baroque epoch. It consists of the dynamic interplay between elites and social masses through public functions and performative events. Baroque persuasion is built on a spectacle experience that embraces different artistic fields<sup>74</sup>. According to Maravall, the *dynamic guidance* is articulated through the illusion that the social masses have an active part into the political life. As an ideology of social entertainment, the baroque aesthetic aimed to distract the social masses from social and political instability. It channeled the discontent of the masses into the affirmation of the social hierarchy and the conservation of the *status quo*. The overly emphasized search for novelties and oddities that distinguishes baroque decoration compensated for the lack of social and political innovation<sup>75</sup>. The monumentality and the intricate layering of symbols that characterize the architecture are addressed to the social audience in its entirety. In the moment of the fruition, the building is decoded by each viewer according to their social position and cultural background. As a result, the baroque aesthetic is extremely transversal in its ability to reach different audiences through a powerful visual unity. It explains the compositional coherence of the artworks with their peculiar use of illogical elements. In the case of Saint Anne's gallery, for instance, distorted proportions and dense decorative patterns break apart and re-combine the viewer's perception in unusual ways. The displacing effect of the stuccos is mirrored by the altarpieces where Solomonic columns, vaulted chambers and the fragmented topping of the attics convert traditionally static elements into highly dynamic decorative features.

The transversal agency of the buildings leads us to reconsider the multiple layers of meaning conveyed by the decorative motifs in relation to the diversified composition of the Goan audience. The combination of illogical elements within a rational technique of persuasion, as well as the predominance of the decorative function, created the formal preconditions for the employment of allusive elements. The churches' visual program was addressed to the groups that occupied the uppermost positions of the colonial order (including the aristocra-

<sup>70</sup> Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*..., 35.

<sup>71</sup> Giulio Carlo Argan was the first art historian to apply a comprehensive focus on the enthymematic implications of the baroque aesthetic by studying the impact of Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric* on art theory. For Argan, the baroque aesthetic represented the definitive step into a functional conception of art as a pure communication method. Following the relativistic turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the homology between artistic representation, nature and social order was broken. The aim of the artwork was not yet the revelation of nature, rather to influence the viewer's perception. As a rhetorical technique, baroque art is intrinsically subliminal since it needs to hide the technical artifice in order to stimulate the emotional effect on the viewer. Giulio Carlo Argan, "La rettorica e l'arte barocca", *Lettere Italiane* 6, no. 3 (1954): 257-264.

<sup>72</sup> Gramsci, *Quaderni*..., 1863-1864.

<sup>73</sup> Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*..., 68.

<sup>74</sup> In regard to our study case, we need to consider the interactive aspect of rituals, oral speeches and music that accompanied the fruition of the woodcarvings and stucco ornaments.

<sup>75</sup> Maravall, *Culture of the baroque*..., 138, 200-224. Maravall's view was influenced by the writings of Heinrich Wölfflin who argued that the baroque aesthetic is built on an apparent sense of freedom. In truth, all elements of the composition are subordinated to each other according to a precise hierarchy culminating in the devotional apex of the artwork: Massimo Lollini, "Maravall's *Culture of the Baroque* between Wölfflin, Gramsci and Benjamin", *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 46 (1998): 187-196, here 191.

cy of Portuguese origin, the ecclesiastical and missionary elites), competitor factions (see the rivalry between Chardo and Brahmin origin clergymen) and lower status groups (the majority of newly converted) with the common intent to enlarge the prestige of the patrons and legitimize their rising position within the colonial hierarchy. However, the ways to deliver this message varied according to the final viewer. As we have seen in the case of the lotus flower, this motif could alternately convey specific affiliations or mere decorative tests. The iconographic analogy with the Kadamba carvings (and the fascinating preservation of some remains within the Catholic churches) might suggest the association of this motif with aristocratic narratives, as the lotus flower was associated with kingship in pre-colonial Hindu temples. The dual identity of these elements indicates the transversal agency of the artworks to convey multiple meanings and to speak at different audiences through a limited set of visual conveyors.

Distinction, allusion and emulation are essential concepts for understanding the artistic outputs created during this struggle for cultural hegemony. The artistic conjuncture initiated by the Jesuits and the Theatines in the 1650s endeavored to emulate the previous artistic campaign of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In that period, Goa became the epicenter of a monumental artistic movement led by the viceroyalty and the archbishopric to dignify the renewed imperial identity of the city. From the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century onward, the artistic initiative shifted from the central powers to the regular orders, and from then to the local secular clergy. Referencing prestigious façade models and architectural solutions enabled these religious groups to emulate the authority of the central powers and, at the same time, distinguish themselves within the socio-religious field. The decorative program of the buildings was one of the most important elements in this dynamic of emulation and dissimulation. The Church of Saint Francis Xavier in Chicalim (1747, *São Francisco Xavier*, Fig. 18) and Saint Stephen in Jua (1759, *Santo Estêvão*, Fig. 19), both inspired by Saint Anne's interiors, support the view that the decorative models introduced by Saint Anne and Our Lady of the Mercy had definitely become hegemonic among the buildings financed by newly converted communities<sup>76</sup>. The territorial reorganization of Goa with its monument campaigns in rural areas, attests to the urban aspect of this shift in cultural hegemony.

### 5. Conclusions: the allusive implications of the emulative attitude

We have seen how imperial crisis and social change were entangled features in this period and that they need to be understood and explained together. In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, a conjuncture of innovations in architecture, decorative language and religious practices, questioned the previous artistic culture of Portuguese Goa. These innovations mirrored a political balance between colonial, religious and social elites that was about to change.

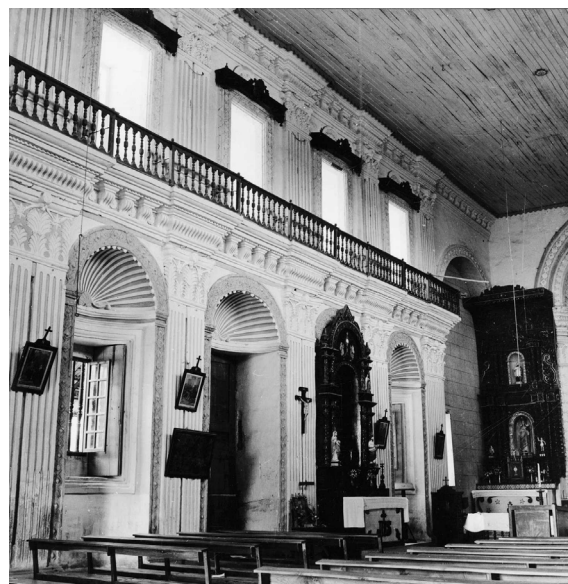


Figure 18. Church of Saint Francis Xavier, Chicalim, 1747. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.



Figure 19. Vault from the chancel, Church of Saint Stephen, Jua, 1759. Source: American Institute of Indian Studies.

It is difficult to state whether the newly converted elites were (and remained) subaltern to the hegemony of their colonial counterparts. On one hand, the polemic literature displays a strategy of integration within the colonial discourse based on the concession from above and the preservation of the monarchic institution<sup>77</sup>. These treatises were indeed addressed to the court in Portugal and not to the Goan audience. Even the incendiary tones

<sup>76</sup> Gomes, *Whitewash...*, 154-203.

<sup>77</sup> Xavier, "D'avid contra Golias...", 123.

used in the *Espelho* by Castro, who openly claimed the natural right of subjects to rebel against unjust conditions, were formulated within a conservative project designed to purify and preserve the monarchy. These apologetic treatises were indeed modelled on traditional canons of Iberian genealogic literature that aimed to dignify the aristocratic lineage<sup>78</sup>. These discursive strategies might suggest that the newly converted never emancipated themselves from the cultural references of the colonizers, thus confirming their subaltern position. However, the nature of subalternity and cultural hegemony is intrinsically conjunctural. The positioning of a social group is not defined by preconceived identities or certain cultural markers. In contrast, the cultural hegemony depends on the context in which it is strategically performed. In the case of this literature, for instance, the use of Classical sources and alternative biblical interpretations aimed to establish the supremacy of the newly converted elites within the empire and the Christian ecumene. In other words, the terms of this inter-social dialogue might have derived from the colonial vocabulary, but their employment resulted into new conceptual significations.

The evidence provided by the literary field is particularly important when related to the artistic dimension. Here too emulation characterized the cultural strategy adopted by the newly converted elites who largely as-

simulated traditional features of coeval European architecture and interior design. The religious buildings, with their impressive decorative program, were designed to engage the believers in a dynamic of emotional participation that promoted social consensus and, therefore, legitimated the authority of the patrons, namely the newly converted elites. In this sense, the subliminal rhetoric of the Goan baroque embodied a practice of cultural hegemony that the local elites emulated and re-interpreted in relation to the peculiar social struggle taking place in Goa. Distinct features of the baroque aesthetic, including the formal adherence to authorized models and the artworks' transversal communication, created meaningful spaces for local agency and appropriations. The analysis of the decorative elements demonstrates that the stylistic formulations initiated by the Church of Saint Anne do not represent a mere derivative emulation of the artistic models imported by the colonial and ecclesiastical elites. The integration of allusive motifs does not convey an openly manifest alterity but rather alludes to a distinct social identity meanwhile remaining within the boundaries of the authorized discourse. These sophisticated strategies of *camouflage* and dissimulation indicate a shift in the hegemonic initiative that questions the linearity of the colonial project and its pervasive effectiveness.

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<sup>78</sup> Eadem, "O lustre do seu sangue: Bramanismo e tópicos de distinção no contexto Português", *Tempo* 30 (2011): 71-99, <https://doi.org/10.1590/s1413-77042011000100004>.

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